



# LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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## **Pregnancy Doubles Reasons to Battle Tobacco Addiction**

Every expectant parent shares a universal hope: “I just want our baby to be healthy.”

Expectant moms and dads can do many things to help their child be healthy, even before it's born. One of the biggest is to avoid exposing it to tobacco from the moment of conception.

Yet current data shows that one of every five pregnant women in Lewis and Clark County reports smoking during her pregnancy. The county rate of smoking among pregnant women is, in fact, significantly higher than the national rate (19.1% compared to 11.2%).

This should be an issue of serious concern to all of us, because it can have devastating and long-lasting implications for a child's health – in utero, in infancy, and throughout life.

### **Extra Risks to Mom, Baby**

When a woman is pregnant, she's breathing for both herself and her unborn child. When she smokes, she exposes her baby to thousands of dangerous chemicals, like nicotine, carbon monoxide, arsenic, and tar. These chemicals starve the growing fetus of the oxygen it needs to develop properly.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have a miscarriage, stillbirth, or ectopic pregnancy. (Smoking can also make it harder to get pregnant in the first place.)

Babies of women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to be born prematurely and at a low birth weight. This can cause lifelong disabilities, like cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and learning problems.

A baby exposed to smoking after birth is at greater risk of developing asthma, allergies, pneumonia, and ear infections – and of dying of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

### **Great Motivator**

*The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department  
is to protect and improve the health of all county residents.*

Pregnancy can be a great motivator for mothers-to-be – and future fathers, too – to try to rid their lives of tobacco. This is already a time of big changes. And quitting or reducing smoking is one of the best ways a woman can protect her baby's health.

Although it's best to quit smoking before getting pregnant, it's never too late. The sooner a woman quits, the healthier she and her baby will be. Even if a woman isn't ready to quit, every cigarette she doesn't smoke helps.

But quitting or cutting back on tobacco use is difficult. It's not just a bad habit, it's an addiction. The nicotine in tobacco products works on the core of the brain in much the same way as heroin, cocaine, and other drugs do.

### **Tips to Help Quit**

Health experts offer a number of tips to help pregnant women (and others) who want to quit:

- Write down your reasons for quitting, and review the list when you're tempted to smoke.
- Choose a "quit day." On that day, throw away your cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Keep occupied. Try going for a walk or doing chores or hobbies to keep your mind off cravings.
- Snack on raw veggies or chew on a toothpick or sugarless gum to satisfy the need to have something in your mouth.
- Stay away from places, activities, and people that trigger your desire to smoke.
- Ask friends and relatives to support your decision to quit.
- Learn other ways of coping with stress, like deep breathing, meditating, or exercising.
- Don't get too discouraged if you slip up. Keep trying. If you can't quit, cut back as much as you can.

### **You're Not Alone**

If you are pregnant or contemplating pregnancy, you don't have to quit smoking alone. Support is available, and some of it is free or inexpensive.

The first step is to let your health-care provider know that you smoke and that you would like help quitting. He or she has a professional obligation to address tobacco use and may prescribe medications that help reduce nicotine cravings and ease withdrawal symptoms.

The Montana Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) offers free cessation coaching seven days a week, including weekday evenings. Specialists are available who understand the issues surrounding smoking during pregnancy. The quitline also can provide free nicotine replacement therapy, such as gum, patches, and lozenges, as well as prescription medications such as Chantix at a reduced cost.

As difficult as it is to quit smoking, isn't it worth a try? It could be one of the greatest expressions of love you ever give your child.

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